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What are You Going to do About Us?

"The speaker delivered a brilliant, impassioned plea for independence that contained a sturdy strain of well-presented logic."—Boston Transcript.

"The speech presents the case for Independence with more force, cogency, and wit than I have found in anything which I have heard and read on the question."—Alleyne Ireland.

"Mr. Bunuan's speech was impressive, delivered in an elegant manner, and evoked general appreciation. If one can move a Williamstown audience, as he did, he can move any audience in America."—Vicente Villamin, Lawyer and Writer.

"It is the best presentation of the Philippine problem from the pro-independent angle that I have heard or read, and I have heard and read many of them."—C. C. Batchelder.

"In the first Philippine conference two weeks ago, some complaints were heard because the Philippine side was not strongly represented. The address we have just heard is certainly a strong presentation of the Filipino case."—Professor Ralston Hayden.

"Again championing the cause of independence, the speaker stood his ground and in seeking to show that the Filipinos are ready for independence he received plenty of applause."—North Adams, Mass., Transcript.

What are You Going to do About Us?

Address delivered by V. G. Banuan, Director of the Philippine Press Bureau, Washington Office of the Philippine Commission of Independence, at the second general conference on the Philippines, Williamstown Institute of Politics, Williamstown, Mass., August 18, 1927. Other speakers were W. Cameron Forbes, former Governor-General of the Philippines, Alleyne Ireland, British writer on colonial subjects; Resident Commissioner Pedro Guevara, Professor Paul Monroe of Columbia University, Professor Ralston Hayden, University of Michigan, Chairman, C. C. Batchelder and Vicente Villamin.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Ever since my arrival in Williamstown a few days ago I have been confronted by many members of the Institute, perhaps having still fresh in their minds elucidations on the Philippine question in the last general conference on the Philippines held two weeks ago in this very hall, with the gentle hint that the Filipino demand for immediate and complete independence is based mainly on emotion or sentiment, an argument or a method of approach, I was told in a most friendly manner, which would not carry with the American people because they are a highly and intensely practical people and that this audience here before me is ~~practically~~ so. (Laughter). You know I came with a great deal of emotion and sentiment and you can imagine how this observation has acted like cold water upon them. (Laughter). I have been pondering over this ever since and I have come to the conclusion that if to proceed from sentiment is wrong, and I do not think it is wrong, the blame should fall not upon the Filipinos but upon the American people themselves. And I will tell you why.

If you will permit a personal allusion, I am a complete product of the very excellent free public school system implanted by America in the Philippines, from the very first grade up to our state university, never having had the privilege of going to school in your country, and my case is the case of millions of young

men and women now supplanting the old. And do you know, my friends, that among the very first things we studied under our American teachers as part of the curriculum were about the mighty deeds of your heroes who struggled that your country might be free—deeds breathing and inspiring sentiments of patriotism and nationality, told and retold in a patriotic little book freely distributed to us called "Stories of Great Americans for Little Americans." And the first history we learned was American history with its thrilling episodes of your struggles for liberty. In fact, it was not until we reached the high school that we came to know of "Great Filipinos for Little Filipinos," (Laughter) and of our own historic struggles for freedom. Thus, when we were still small children, we knew all about "Washington Crossing the Delaware," "Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence," "Patrick Henry's 'Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death'." With what our opponents are pleased to term the Oriental aptitude for the dramatic, seasoned as it were with Latin imaginativeness, we learned these almost by heart. (Laughter). We even learned and tried to live up to the moral of the story of Washington and his famous cherry tree which I believed to be true until I came to this country and was told it is only a myth. (Laughter and Applause). In the meanwhile you proceeded to erect a government for us based precisely upon these very sentiments you had taught us. So if in the course of our campaign for independence, and if in the course of my remarks, you note sentiment creeping in you can blame it upon yourselves. (Applause).

My friends, the one outstanding fact of the entire Philippine question is that the Filipino people would like to be as free and as independent as any fully independent nation today, and you have always told us that this is a very laudable and commendable aspiration. Alongside this fact is another fact and that is that America is solemnly committed to the realization of that aspiration. These are the two undeniable facts that must be faced. They are a necessary premise to any consideration of the Philippine question. As we Filipinos view it the time has come to settle that question and settle it in the only way compatible with these facts—the granting of im-

mediate and complete independence, instead of continuing with the present policy of indefinite postponement. In proposing our solution immediately there arise in your minds three questions and from these I will base my discussion of the problem.

These questions are:

(1). Are you able to maintain yourselves?—the economics of the situation.

(2). Are you able to defend yourselves?—the international aspect of the problem.

(3). Are you ready to govern yourselves?—the question of Filipino capacity.

With regard to the first, the main consideration is the question of free trade relationship with America. It is asserted that it is suicide for independence to be granted now because of the financial benefits we would have to forego. It is pointed out that there is saved to the Philippines $40,000,000 which we would otherwise pay as duty for Philippine goods entering the United States were free trade discontinued, and that the Philippine people can ill afford to set aside that benefit. But, paradoxical as it may seem, that is the very reason why we are asking for independence now, for it is clear that if we, as alleged, can hardly now afford to let go this financial benefit it will be infinitely much harder for us to lay it aside later when, with the natural increase in trade between the two countries, this advantage will have become much greater and thus make it much harder for us to stand alone on our feet. You cannot escape the logic of that fact. If it is $40,000,000, that we would now lose, it will be $80,000,000 or $100,000,000 20 or 30 years later, a financial advantage which, while it lasts, is most beneficial to us but which will make it that much more difficult for us to separate from you in the future. When you tell us that indefinite postponement of independence is necessary in order to enable ourselves to be better prepared economically, what would actually happen is that you are pampering us with an ever-increasing luxury. You are, in other words, if I may use a simple metaphor, changing the silver spoon in our mouth into one of gold, the effect of which is to reduce us to practical impotence. Your policy of postponement, in effect, is leading us to what may be termed a very luxurious economic grave.

This phase of the question is clear on the one hand. On the other hand, the longer we are with you the more American interests will increase in the Philippines, and therefore the harder still for us to get our independence. You all know that American capital now in the Philippines is for permanent incorporation of the Philippines as a territory. From this angle alone you can appreciate our insistence on independence and there is some truth to the remark that every American dollar invested in the Islands is an additional nail driven in the coffin of our independence. One of your immediate necessities today is rubber and, if I may say so frankly, rubber is today giving more elasticity to the already plastic pledge of America to the Filipino people. (Applause).

You will see, therefore, that both considerations, one the interesting paradox I have just brought to your attention, the other the natural growth of American interests in the Philippines—make it necessary to have independence granted now.

The next question in your mind is, how are you going to defend yourselves? I desire to point out that postponement of independence to twenty or thirty years from now will not make us strong enough to defend our country from aggression. As a matter of fact with the exception of two or three of the most powerful no nation today is able to defend her independence, yet they exist free and unmolested. Despite assertions of the prophets of disaster to the contrary, universal peace and amity is greater today than at any time in the world's history. As an asset in our favor there is the League of Nations among the members of which is Japan and England. You are all aware of Article X of the covenant of the League which is as follows:

> "The members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all members of the League. In case of any such aggression or in case of any threat of such aggression, the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled."

Cuba, Haiti, Siam and the Irish Free State have been admitted as members of the League, and it is only reasonable to expect that the Philippines, once

independent, will be admitted to membership. I know what some of you are mentally saying about the League. Just the same, you cannot but admit that it is an instrument for world peace and justice and an asset especially to small nations unable to protect themselves otherwise from the bigger nations. (Applause). The Philippines could at least have the protection of the League.

It is asserted that Japan needs the Philippines for the overflow of her increasingly large population. Granting for the sake of argument that there is great need for this overflow of population, the Philippines is not the proper place for the Japanese. It has been shown by experience that they do not thrive in our country, for the climate is too warm for them. This is proven by the fact that there are only about 10,000 Japanese in the Philippines despite the fact that there is no Japanese anti-immigration law there, whereas in Hawaii and in the United States, where there are very strict immigration laws, there are, in the former, about 120,000 and in the latter 140,000 Japanese. As a matter of fact, statistics show that there are only half a million Japanese outside the Japanese empire.

Even if Japan had any designs toward the Philippines she would not, I am sure, dare realize them. As a matter of fact, Japan would be the very first to agree to respect the territorial integrity of the Philippines because once independent there would be one western nation less in the Pacific area over which she would like to be supreme. If you will look at any world map, you will note that there are a number of islands belonging to the United States almost in a straight line, pointing like a sharp sword to the very heart of Japan. She knows what that means to her, both in relation to trade and to the possibilities of war. For the United States to leave the Philippines is to Japan like a lessening of the sharpness of that sword, and therefore it is to her own interest for the Philippines to be independent. Hence, I repeat, she would be the very first to recognize us.

Further any such design by Japan would not be looked upon with friendly eyes by the European governments having colonies in the East especially the British. The Philippines lie along the water trade

route between the British possessions of North America and her possessions in the East. Commercial boats plying between Canada and Australia and India pass through the Philippines both ways. It is logical to assume that England would very much prefer seeing the Philippines independent to having a potential enemy in the Philippines such as Japan.

But why always regard Japan as a land-grabbing nation? In the last Geneva Conference, as you remember, she seems to have been the only nation earnestly making an effort to reduce naval armaments. (Laughter and Applause). America and England very laudably started to reduce but ended up with each seemingly trying to put one over on the other and the Conference went to smash. (Laughter and Applause).

The next question in your minds is are you ready and capable of governing yourselves? My answer to that question is, to put it conservatively, we are as ready now to govern ourselves as any country in the world that started with its independence to govern itself. We have now in the Philippines practically all the elements necessary for the launching of a new independent and self-governing country.

In this respect, America's problem in the Philippines, reduced to its simplest term, is the implantation of democracy, a purely Occidental product in a country of Oriental location and origin. With this in mind you will agree with me when I say that not all the ways of democracy which are fit for the peoples of the West because they are of the West are best and the most appropriate for the peoples inhabiting the East because they are of the East. The latter, therefore, should adopt only those basic elements, only those broad principles, only those fundamental practices, which have made popular government a success in America and in other countries where it has been tried. Such a foundation stone of democracy we already have in our country and America, therefore, should by granting us independence now, permit us to build the superstructure, to work out the details, to direct its growth, to shape its destiny, in conformity with the traditions and culture of our own race, with our nature, with our environment, with our climate, with our geography, with our psychology, with our philosophy. (Applause). I will briefly enumerate what these basic elements are upon which we can now, ourselves, furnish the details or superstructure.

First, the framework of popular government, the executive, the legislative and the judicial, and all its ramifications with the exception of those which are not practical to adopt in the Philippines, we already have. Adoption of the budget system years before it was adopted in this country shows that we have the foresight to choose what is good for the efficient functioning of our government. Ninety-eight per cent of the entire personnel of our government is now in Filipino hands and has been functioning with results termed by President Harding as "without parallel in the history of colonization." Of course, the administration by Filipinos has not been free from abuse and mismanagement, and I may add that our failings and our failures are magnified in this country, but it should be remembered that abuses and mismanagement and graft exist everywhere, even in your own. The framework of democratic government is now there. We want to be permitted to work out the details.

Another basic element we already have is the widespread exercise of the right of suffrage, a practice which we have adopted from this country. In practically every election more than eighty per cent of the registered voters go to the polls and vote. This demonstrates that in the Philippines there is a great deal of interest in public affairs. This is especially significant when one takes into consideration the fact that in the last two presidential elections in the United States only about forty-nine per cent of the registered voters of this country voted in the first and about fifty-one per cent in the last. The Coolidge boom, I understand, was responsible for the two per cent increase. (Laughter). Your record at the polls seems to me falls a little short of the kind of government prescribed for you by the great Abraham Lincoln who said your government is a "government of the people, for the people, and by the people," an illusion which, with the help of America, we are trying to transform into reality in the Philippines. (Laughter).

Our degree of enlightenment and education is another basic element. Our literacy is sixty per cent, which is higher than the literacy of thirty-six of the fifty-six independent nations of today. Education is spreading and today nearly 5,000,000 of our population speak the English language.

Another stabalizing factor we have in the Philippines is the even distribution of property. There are no extremely poor nor are there extremely rich in

the Islands. Eighty per cent of our 11,000,000 population own and live on their farms. Foreigners have often commented on the practical absence of beggars. I did not know of such a thing as professional beggar until I saw it in your films depicting that phase of life in America. (Laughter). You can well sympathize with us in our struggle against the possession of our national wealth in large quantities by outsiders or by Filipinos themselves.

Another important asset in the establishment of democracy in the Philippines is the high place which our women occupy in the life of our country, especially in the home. As in the West our women are on an equal rank with the men, and perhaps more so. For the information of the women in this audience, the Filipino woman holds the purse strings of the home, a privilege, I understand the women of this country are aching to have. Modesty and charm, loyalty to home and husband are her marked characteristics. There are practically no divorces in the Philippines.

Our position is clear. We already have the foundation stone of democracy in the Philippines, and if I may speak in a lighter fashion, may I say that if we continue our relationships very much longer we shall not only inherit the basic principles of your democracy and the virile elements of your civilization but also the superficialities of that democracy and the by-products of that civilization. It has been said and said truly that the people of a colony have the tendency to imitate those of the mother country. Do you know that our girls are already adopting the typically American bob and shingle, and dancing the Charleston, and probably later on the Black Bottom? Can you blame us if we ask for our independence now? (Laughter and Applause).

My friends, such is the Philippine question as we Filipinos analyze it. All we ask is in line with what you yourselves came to do in the Philippines and with what you yourselves promised to give to the Filipinos—a pledge around which our faith in America is built, convinced in the very depths of our hearts that you will do us justice and eternally grateful for the many things you have done for us. (Applause). America has the sole determination as to the final solution of the Philippine problem, and it seems to me that with all that has been said, here or elsewhere, it remains for this Great Republic to answer one question—it remains for every person in this hall as a member of the great American body politic to answer that which we have been asking and now again ask: Gentlemen, what are you going to do about us? * * * What are you going to do about us? (Applause).